

be considered under the following limitations: that there be 4 hours of debate on the conference report with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the conference report, without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

AUTHORIZING ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR EMERGENCY REPAIRS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE INTERSTATE I-35 BRIDGE

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3311, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3311) to authorize additional funds for emergency repairs and reconstruction of the Interstate I-35 bridge located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, that collapsed on August 1, 2007, to waive the \$100,000,000 limitation on emergency relief funds for those emergency repairs and reconstruction, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment that is at the desk be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2654) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To improve expanded eligibility for transit and travel information services)

In section 1112(b)(1) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (as added by section 3), strike subparagraph (B) and insert the following:

“(B) use not to exceed \$5,000,000 of the funds made available for fiscal year 2007 for Federal Transit Administration Discretionary Programs, Bus and Bus Facilities (without any local matching funds requirement) for operating expenses of the Minnesota State department of transportation for actual and necessary costs of maintenance and operation, less the amount of fares earned, which are provided by the Metropolitan Council (of Minnesota) as a temporary substitute for highway traffic service following the collapse of the Interstate I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 1, 2007, until highway traffic service is restored on such bridge.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed, and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 3311) was read the third time and passed.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, my colleague from Minnesota is here. I will yield to her if she wishes to proceed first.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I think everyone in this Chamber and the country and the world is aware of the tragedy that befell our State a few days ago. This is a bridge that is not just in my backyard, it is actually in my front yard. It is only 8 blocks away. It is one of the most well-traveled bridges in our State.

Senator COLEMAN and I were on the ground and saw the great damage yesterday. When I looked down and saw that miracle bus on the precipice and I thought about the fear in the eyes of those little children as they watched as the concrete and the road basically fell down below them, I couldn't even imagine what they went through.

But then I met the heroes, the people who dove in the water over and over again looking for survivors. The death toll would have been so much worse if our community had not come together—the police, fire personnel, emergency personnel, and ordinary citizens—to save the lives of our people.

Today we thank our colleagues because it is good news that they stood by us in a bipartisan way to help the people of our State. The vote is good news at the close of a week that has brought so much heartbreak to our State. This was, as I said, the most heavily traveled bridge in our State, and our people and our businesses depend on it.

Today in the Senate, as well as in the House of Representatives, the Congress voted to give us the opportunity to access the funds we are going to need to repair this bridge.

There was also a focus on transit money, which is so important. The day we got into Minnesota, only 12 hours after this happened, our State had already put on 25 extra buses. They had billboards showing people the routes to go. It was an absolutely extraordinary effort. They were prepared. But I don't think anyone, in any State, can ever be prepared for a tragedy such as this.

I thank all my colleagues at the close of a very long week for their words of support. Our thoughts and our prayers are with the victims and with their families. Today, the Congress stood tall and proud and came immediately to their aid.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to my colleague from Minnesota.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, my colleague from Minnesota has described the spirit of a people confronted with great tragedy. It was horrible to be there by that bridge and see those cars, some in the water, others that had burst on fire—a tractor trailer—to see a school bus on the precipice. I think it had dropped 20 feet. Had it gone a little further to the side, it

would have gone over the edge. Had it gone a little further forward, it would have been caught between crashing portions of steel and concrete. Had it gone another distance, it would have been in the water. Yet every one of those 60 kids walked away.

We saw tragedy. There are those who have lost their lives and suffered great pain, but we also saw miracles. We saw the reaction of a community that came together at every level—the first responders, the citizens who came together to jump in the water to try and help folks who were in situations that were hard to understand.

In addition to that, when Senator KLOBUCHAR and I got there early in the morning, we sat in on a briefing with the Governor and the mayor and the first responders, the county commissioners, city council members—some Democrats, some Republicans. It didn't matter.

I sat there as a former mayor remembering what it was like on 9/11, remembering how unprepared we were on 9/11. And after 9/11, as a city, we tried to take stock and recognize that our first responders weren't tied into what was going on at hospitals, and various police and fire from different communities could not communicate. What we did is we went about the process of training and training and training, preparing and preparing and preparing, and it came together. I watched in the city of Minneapolis, and as a former mayor I took pride in the way the people responded.

I think the Nation saw it, I think the world saw it, and it made me proud to represent Minnesota.

I say that because I saw the same spirit in the Senate tonight. The people in Minneapolis have some great needs. My colleague in the House, Congressman OBERSTAR, put forth a plan that would provide authorization to rebuild the bridge. There was also provided some extra money on the table to deal with some very immediate needs.

I was there when the Secretary of Transportation made the pledge that “we are going to be there to help,” and we had some challenges then in moving that forward. There were some technical issues. But what I found along the way was my colleagues on both sides of the aisle simply said, how can we help? How can we get this done? The chairman of the Budget Committee a little while ago discovered there was one minor technical issue. He said, we are going to take care of this.

I got a call today from the director of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Administrator. I got a call yesterday from the head of the SBA. At the scene yesterday we had the head of the Transportation Safety Board. We had the Secretary of Transportation, the highway administrator. They were all there. Everyone had come together. And on the floor of the Senate I saw that tonight, that spirit, and I simply say thank you to my colleagues. On behalf of the people of Minnesota and the

people of Minneapolis, I say thank you for the support you have shown and the spirit in which you have come together.

At times, there is so much rancor in our Nation today—this partisan divide. It is so uplifting to be in this Chamber to see my colleagues on both sides of the aisle come together, and so I say thank you.

Let me end by asking that we not forget there has been a great tragedy; that lives have been lost. Let us keep the families of those who have lost loved ones in our prayers. Let us make sure we continue in the effort to ensure that the resources are there to rebuild, and let us do it quickly. Let us do those things to expedite the process. This is a major thoroughfare, a major piece of the transportation system in the State of Minnesota. We need to get the money back to Minnesota and get the people on the ground who can get the work done.

We can do it, and we can do it quickly. We will rebuild this bridge, we will rebuild quickly, we will find out what caused this terrible, terrible tragedy, and we will keep those who have suffered loss in our prayers.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE STATUS FOR LIBERIANS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me first begin by commending Senators COLEMAN and KLOBUCHAR for their very aggressive and appropriate response to a crisis in their home State of Minnesota. We were proud, all of us, to join with the Senators in helping their people in the face of great need.

This is interesting, because I rise for the moment to speak about another measure which both Senator COLEMAN and Senator KLOBUCHAR have joined with me as cosponsors of, and that is the temporary protective status for Liberians. The Presiding Officer, Senator WHITEHOUSE, is also a cosponsor, along with Senators KERRY and LEAHY. It is a bipartisan measure. It is in response to a situation where there are thousands of Liberians here legally, but they are in danger of being deported because their status could change by October 1.

The House of Representatives earlier this week passed unanimously by voice vote H.R. 3123, which would extend for 1 year their temporary protected status. In fact, the minority leader, Mr. BLUNT, was the key leader in this effort, along with our colleague from Rhode Island, Congressman PATRICK KENNEDY, and I again thank Senators COLEMAN and KLOBUCHAR, and all the cosponsors.

The Liberian individuals we are talking about were in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s when a brutal civil war broke out in Liberia. They could not go home, and this country granted them protective status. That status, in one form or another, has been continued for now almost 15,

16 years. There are many families of Liberians in this country whose children are American citizens—in fact, who are about on the verge of college or even older.

Today, Liberia has made some progress. It has a democratically elected president. She is a remarkable woman, leading her nation. But, still, it is not a country that is ready to accept individuals who are in the United States, who are part of our community, who have American children, and who are contributing to our communities. We should, I think, give them the opportunity to make a choice of whether they should stay here or go back to their homeland of Liberia.

Every year they face a precipice that comes on October 1, when they worry whether their status will be extended; when they worry whether they will have to leave children behind, give up their jobs, leave their community and be lifted up, literally, to go back to a country which is, quite frankly, not ready to accept them and to use their talents. So each year we have been able to, either through administrative decision or through our efforts here, extend their stay. I urge that my colleagues consider taking up H.R. 3123, and I requested on behalf of my cosponsors a unanimous consent to do that. I am told that on the Democratic side there were no objections, but, apparently, there are some objections on the other side. I want to make it clear to all my colleagues I will renew this request time and time again when we return in September.

We have to act before October 1. It would be unfair, unjust, and unwise not to grant this exemption. It was accepted on a bipartisan basis overwhelmingly in the other body, and I think we should do the same here in the Senate. I urge any of my colleagues who have questions—and I think at this juncture there are many who might have legitimate questions—please, I would be happy to answer them. I would be happy to respond. I believe I can make a compelling case that in terms of fairness, in terms of equity, in terms of recognizing what these individuals have done to contribute to communities all across this country, they should be granted at least 1 more year. This is not a permanent adjustment, this is an additional year.

Let me stress one thing also. We have had a great deal of discussion in this Congress about immigration. These individuals are legally here in the United States, and they have been given the opportunity to work, they pay taxes, and they are not qualified for any social benefits. I am very proud of Rhode Island because we have a large community, relatively speaking, and they have become extraordinarily productive members of our community. So I feel very strongly, and I know my colleague, the Presiding Officer, does, that we are going to do all we can over the several weeks before October 1 to make sure this is adopted; that we follow the

other body in doing so. I don't want anyone to mistake my objection to other provisions that are going forward. I am sincerely committed to getting this done. I hope we get it done, and I thank the Presiding Officer for his cosponsorship and leadership.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, the Senator from Rhode Island has been so persuasive in his argument, I ask that he add me as a cosponsor to the bill.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator be added as a cosponsor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, both our colleagues from Minnesota have left the floor, but I join with my colleague from Rhode Island and others here in expressing our regrets and our condolences to the people of Minnesota for the tragedy that State has gone through with the collapse of the highway over the Mississippi River. Certainly all of us extend our sympathies to those who lost loved ones and those who were injured. We in Congress will do whatever we can to help out in that situation, as all of us have at one time or another stood in this Chamber and asked for help for our States because of a tragedy that has occurred. It is very much in keeping with the tradition of this body to respond to tragedies such as the one Minnesota has experienced.

I want to take a moment, however, and urge my colleagues during the next few weeks to consider an important bill to try to address the growing problem of deteriorating infrastructure across our nation. For nearly 2 years, the Senator from Nebraska and I, Senator HAGEL, have been working on this bill, along with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Felix Rohatyn, who has been very involved in the issues of New York City, and our former Senate colleagues Warren Rudman and Bob Kerrey.

The numbers are staggering. There are some 160,000 bridges of the 900,000 in our country that are deficient, to put it mildly. We saw what happened in Minnesota. There are 614 transit systems in deep need of repair. One-third of all our highways are in need of significant repair and improvement. The water systems and wastewater systems in the United States are, on average, almost 100 years old. Clearly, the ability of our appropriations process to maintain the needed infrastructure for our country is inadequate. We all know that. So we have spent time over the last 2, 2½ years working with people on Wall Street and others to come up with ideas on how we might attract capital to the area of infrastructure development.